

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
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R 071215Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY SOFIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4379
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L SOFIA 0640

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: BU, SOPN, CSCE
SUBJECT: COMPLAINT ON BULGARIAN INTERFERENCE WITH FREER
COMMUNICATIONS

1. AMBASSADOR, IN CALL ON MFA FOURTH DEPT (US AND WESTERN
EUROPE) HEAD AMBASSADOR GOTSEV, NOTED WITH REGRET THREE RECENT
BULGARIAN PRACTICES WHICH DO NOT CONTRIBUTE TO FREER COMMUNI-
CATIONS OR TO IMPROVED BULGARIAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS.

2. AMBASSADOR NOTED FREQUENT INTERFERENCE BY MILITIA GUARDS
POSTED IN FRONT OF THE CHANCERY WITH VISITORS ENTERING THE
EMBASSY, INCLUDING UNRECOGNIZED WIVES OF EMBASSY PERSONNEL
AND REPRESENTATIVES OF OTHER DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS, AS WELL AS
BULGARIANS AND FOREIGN STUDENTS. IN SOME CASES, PEOPLE WERE
WAVED AWAY OR TOLD TO KEEP MOVING, IN OTHERS PEOPLE WALKING
TO ENTER THE CHANCERY WERE TOLD TO GO AWAY OR ASKED TO
PRODUCE IDENTIFICATION AND QUERIED ON REASON FOR WISH-
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ING TO ENTER. AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT THESE PRACTICES WERE
NOT REQUIRED AS A SECURITY MEASURE, AND COULD NOT BE
JUSTIFIED ON ANY OTHER BASIS. GOTSEV ASKED IF IT WAS
THEN AMERICAN WISH THAT PEOPLE NOT BE "SCREENED" BEFORE
ENTERING THE CHANCERY. THE AMBASSADOR REAFFIRMED THAT
WE DO NOT WISH SUCH SCREENING, EXCEPT IN POSSIBLY RARE
INSTANCE IN WHICH THERE IS SPECIFIC REASON TO BELIEVE THERE

MAY BE A SECURITY THREAT. GOTSEV PROMISED TO LOOK INTO THE SITUATION.

3. AMBASSADOR ALSO NOTED THAT FOR THE LAST TWO MONTHS OR SO WESTERN NEWSPAPERS WERE NO LONGER AVAILABLE AT HOTELS, AS THEY HAD BEEN SINCE APRIL 1977. HE OBSERVED THAT THIS WAS A RETROGRADE DEVELOPMENT WITH RESPECT TO INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION AND EXCHANGE OF IDEAS. IT APPEARED TO BE ROUGHLY COINCIDENT WITH THE END OF THE BELGRADE CSCE REVIEW CONFERENCE. GOTSEV SAID HE WAS UNAWARE OF THIS DEVELOPMENT, BUT COULD GIVE CATEGORICAL ASSURANCE THAT IT WAS NOT RELATED TO THE ENDING OF THE CSCE CONFERENCE. HE OBSERVED THAT HE HIMSELF HAD NOT BEEN RECEIVING WESTERN NEWSPAPERS SINCE THE FIRST OF THE YEAR, AND SAID THERE HAD BEEN SOME BUREAUCRATIC DIFFICULTIES WITH THE HEMUS ORGANIZATION WHICH PLACES SUBSCRIPTION ORDERS IN THE WEST AND DISTRIBUTES WESTERN PERIODICALS IN BULGARIA. HE ALSO ASKED WHAT AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS WERE INVOLVED. AMBASSADOR REPLIED THAT INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE WAS THE ONLY AMERICAN NEWSPAPER WHICH HAD BEEN AVAILABLE DURING THE PAST YEAR, BUT THAT LE MONDE AND A NUMBER OF OTHER NON-COMMUNIST WESTERN NEWSPAPERS WERE ALSO AFFECTED. GOTSEV SAID HE WOULD LOOK INTO THE SITUATION.

4. AMBASSADOR THEN RAISED, ON PERSONAL BASIS, MATTER OF WHAT HE OBSERVED TO BE AN INCREASED SHARPNESS OF ANTI-CONFIDENTIAL

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AMERICAN COMMENT IN BULGARIAN PRESS AND SOME OFFICIAL STATEMENTS. GOTSEV ARGUED THAT ALTHOUGH IT WAS NOT GENERALLY BELIEVED IN THE WEST, THERE WAS A "FREEDOM OF THE PRESS" IN BULGARIA TOO. AMBASSADOR REPLIED THAT WITHOUT DEBATING THAT POINT, THE KIND OF QUESTIONING OF THE MOTIVATIONS OF AMERICAN POLICY MAKERS, FOR EXAMPLE, TO WHICH HE WAS OBJECTING APPEARED ALSO IN PUBLIC STATEMENTS OF BULGARIAN OFFICIALS. WITHOUT IDENTIFYING IT AS A SPEECH BY ZHIVKOV, HE REFERRED TO THE GRATUITOUS ADVERSE COMPARISON OF THE AMERICAN BICENTENNIAL WITH THE RECENT BULGARIAN CENTENARY. ALSO, WHILE DIFFERENCES EXISTED AND WOULD OF COURSE BE EXPRESSED ON A NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL QUESTIONS, IT WAS NOT HELPFUL FOR THE MOTIVATIONS OF GOVERNMENT LEADERS TO BE IMPUGNED. GOTSEV SAID HE WOULD MAKE NOTE OF THE AMBASSADOR'S COMMENTS. HE ALSO SAID HE WOULD DISCUSS THE MATTER WITH MR. NONEV (MFA PRESS CHIEF).

5. THE ABOVE DISCUSSION TOOK PLACE IN A GENERAL REVIEW OF BULGARIAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS, AND WITHOUT ACRIMONY. GOTSEV'S RESPONSE WAS GENERALLY NOT POLEMICAL. WE DOUBT THERE WILL BE MUCH IF ANY IMPACT ON THE TONE OF

BULGARIAN OFFICIAL AND PRESS STATEMENTS. IT WILL BE
INTERESTING TO SEE WHETHER THERE IS ANY CHANGE ON
AVAILABILITY OF WESTERN NEWSPAPERS, AND ALSO REDUCTION
IN MILITIA HARASSMENT AND INTIMIDATION OF VISITORS TO
THE CHANCERY.
GARTHOFF

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